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National Intelligence Council

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MEMORANDUM FOR: See Distribution

FROM: Walter L. Barrows
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SUBJECT: Liberia: Next Steps

1. Liberia was the lead item at my monthly Warning and Forecast meeting yesterday. Intelligence Community analysts pondered how the crisis there might evolve in the immediate future.

2. Battle for Monrovia. Most analysts expect Charles Taylor and his NPFL rebels to move against Monrovia in the next few weeks. A bloodbath is very likely, and the crisis could drag on for some time.

3. Taylor likely feels the need to act decisively:

- Rains will intensify soon, making operations even for guerrillas more difficult.
- His forces are suffering food and other shortages.
- Discipline is breaking down as leadership deficiencies are exposed.

4. On the other hand, he needs more manpower than the roughly 1,500-2,000 rebels presently available in the Monrovia area. We estimate 3,000 as the minimum required; the remainder will have to be redeployed from rebel-controlled areas elsewhere in the country. This could take some time and add to Taylor's command and control problems, particularly if frisky young rebels try to take their own initiatives against Monrovia.

5. Rather than an outright assault on central Monrovia, we expect Taylor first to attack targets on the city's outskirts.

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Camp Schiefflin, Careysburg (near our Voice of America installation), or the government or nearby missionary radio stations are good candidates. This would be in keeping with previous NPFL strategy, which has been to avoid head-on confrontations and instead use probings to dissipate Army morale.

6. Doe's forces may well acquit themselves better in and around Monrovia than they have elsewhere. He has some 600 of his "best" troops immediately available, including the Executive Mansion Guard, and they intend to fight. A critical factor will be the loyalty of key military leaders, several of whom seem ready to defect. Should they abandon Doe, his forces in Monrovia would probably scatter in the same manner as their brethren in earlier battles.

7. Whatever the exact scenario for the fighting in Monrovia, the aftermath is likely to be chaotic--with the citizenry at the mercy of desperate and ill-disciplined troops, rebels bent on settling tribal scores, and lack of food. Food shortages are already severe throughout the country.

8. Peace Talks. Doe's timely departure from office would probably avert a battle for Monrovia. As long as he remains unwilling to step aside, the rebels will be reluctant to suspend hostilities. We hold out little hope for the Freetown talks, and Taylor's negotiating team may not even show up when they are due to resume on Monday.

9. A Doe Redoubt in the Bush? Chances are that Doe will fight it out in Monrovia. But he may be preparing an escape hatch by amassing some 2,500 Krahn troops in his home county in the far southeast, near the border with Ivory Coast. Should he choose to conduct his own bush war from Grand Jide County, whatever government succeeded his would probably not be threatened severely. His "counter-rebellion" would suffer immediate supply problems, intra-Krahn feuding, and lack of outside support, with the possible exception of some sympathy from tribal kinsmen in Ivory Coast.

10. A Taylor-led Government. Assuming he emerges on top, Taylor almost certainly would insist on heading the follow-on government. It would be dominated by NPFL members, with some participation by prominent Liberians such as Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. Taylor's immediate need would be to raise revenues and find financial and administrative expertise. While much of Liberian infrastructure remains intact, interrupted rice production, empty government coffers, refugees, and poor

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relations with international lenders will pressure any new regime to also seek outside financial assistance. In addition, Taylor would likely want to renegotiate with the US Government over rent for facilities and with foreign businessmen over terms of concessions and contracts--to raise revenues and open opportunities for graft. It goes without saying a Taylor-led government would be ill-equipped to deal with the myriad of worsening problems bequeathed by Doe. (S NF)

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